



Letterneck

13th MEU's Family Gram

Nov. 1, 2000

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)

Vol. 2, No. 3

13th MEU helps recovery operation



Sgt. M.C. Miller

The guided missile destroyer USS Cole sits atop MV Blue Marlin, a Norwegian dry dock ship which was contracted to deliver the damaged American warship home. The Cole survived a suspected terrorist attack Oct. 12 which killed 17 Sailors and wounded 39 while the vessel was refueling in Aden, Yemen.

by 1stLt. Jeff Landis

ADEN, Yemen – After providing more than three weeks of assistance to USS Cole after a terrorist bomb killed 17 Sailors and wounded 39, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group watched the guided missile destroyer get underway again Sunday, this time with the help of the Norwegian dry dock ship Blue Marlin.

The contracted heavy-lift ship will carry the battered destroyer on its journey back to the United States via the Cape of Good Hope at the southernmost tip of Africa.

Shortly after the bombing, the 13th MEU (SOC) and Tarawa ARG were called from the Arabian Gulf to respond to the ter-

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Harriers provide close air support to MEU

by Sgt. M.C. Miller

Despite the recent groundings of the Harrier, a detachment of newer AV-8B II Harriers in Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161 (Rein) is proving the aircraft still has what it takes to be at the tip of the spear.

The Marine Corps grounded all of its Vertical/Short Takeoff and Landing jets July 12 due to problems with the main engine bearing said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bruce Jones, a 37-year-old AV-8B maintenance material control officer from Orlando, Fla. This grounding initially included all of HMM-161's Harriers.

The 13th MEU(SOC) was going to leave without the fixed-wing close air support of its aviation combat element because of the grounding, until three days before the deployment, CWO2 Jones said. Headquarters Marine Corps issued a statement explaining exactly what was wrong with the bearings and that some of the newer jets were allowed to fly. Thirty percent of the Corps' fleet of AV-8B IIs had a slightly different engine configura-

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Cpl. Branden P. O'Brien

An AV-8B Harrier aircraft taxis on a runway in Australia during sustainment training there in September. The Marine Corps grounded many Harriers in July, but HMM-161 transferred newer Harriers that weren't grounded to the unit, allowing it to deploy.

'Mail Call' is sounded

Postal NCOIC delivers goods to MEU

by SSgt. Stephen Gude

Sergeant Cecelia Johnson became a postal clerk because she wanted to do something she would be happy with for the rest of her Marine Corps career.

Little did she know she was getting into a job that would make everyone else happy, as the postal noncommissioned officer in charge for 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).

"You never see people aboard ship as happy as when the announcement, 'mail call' is made," said the 24-year old from East St. Louis, Ill. "And you know it's always on people's minds, because when it doesn't come for a while, I'll get at least 20 to 30 people asking me, 'When are we going to get mail?'"

The outgoing sergeant, who stands 5 feet 6 inches with big brown eyes, plans to make the Marine Corps a career, lateral moved into the postal field from food services. She was having a good time as a cook, but wanted to see more in her career.

"If I was going to stay in, I wanted to do something I would be happy with," Sgt. Johnson said. "Being the postal NCOIC on the float is fun. It's a different environment and a good experience for me."

In this environment, Sgt. Johnson has learned that when mail comes in, it's an



SSgt. Stephen Gude

Sgt. Cecelia Johnson, right, the postal NCOIC for 13th MEU(SOC), delivers mail to Sgt. Robert Hudnall of 13th MEU(SOC)'s S-4, Nov. 3.

all-day job for her, even at liberty ports.

"I've always realized how important the mail is," she said. "It doesn't matter how many e-mails you get or telephone calls you make, there's nothing like getting mail, so when it comes in, people want it, and I work hard to get it to them."

"In Australia," she continued, "we got the mail in at 10 a.m. and didn't leave until 9 p.m."

The ships of 13th MEU(SOC) and Tarawa Amphibious Ready Group recently received a huge shipment of much-anticipated mail, which was delayed for Operation Determined Response.

"Since the Cole incident, the schedule for mail was thrown off," Sgt. Johnson said. "For security reasons, the routes for mail to get to the ship changed."

With that delay, the question came

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MEU Message Board

From 13th MEU(SOC) CO

This past month has been an exceptionally demanding one for the Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU(SOC). The national military response to the bombing of USS Cole sent us on short notice to Aden, Yemen, to participate in the very difficult mission of assisting in the recovery of that proud ship.

As I write, USS Duluth remains on station off Aden, providing security and support for the ongoing FBI investigation of the Cole attack, while the remainder of the MEU is in the Arabian Gulf, ready to respond to any crisis in this area. An event like the Cole bombing reminds us once again that the mere fact we serve our country in uniform makes us a special target to those who hate the things that America represents. We must remain particularly vigilant while in this troubled part of the world and

have had little time for liberty or relaxation. However, we all find ourselves thinking of home, particularly with the halfway point of the cruise now behind us.

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, know that our thoughts will increasingly be with you, even if we can not be at home for the holidays. You can continue to take great pride in the performance of every member of the 13th MEU(SOC). From East Timor to Yemen, they have demonstrated what is best in our great country and they live by the values on which our nation was founded. God Bless You all and know that we are thinking of you as the holiday season approaches.



Col. C.J. Gunther

Sergeant Major Senecal's words of wisdom

When we get back home from our float, October will be a month I'm sure all the Marines and Sailors of 13th MEU(SOC) will talk about for a long time.

Why? Because this has been a month which has demonstrated just how versatile the MEU is, whether it was providing force protection, security, hot chow, video and photographic coverage, intelligence, logistics and whatever else was necessary for us to accomplish the mission set by the commander of Operation Determined Response. We definitely demonstrated the meaning of "Special Operations

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HARRIER

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tion and were not affected by the restrictions.

The Marines immediately transferred jets from squadrons within Marine Air Group 13, under the direction of Col. David Buland, MAG-13 commanding officer. Four of the newer-model Harriers were relocated from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., directly to USS Tarawa to replace the grounded ones.

"Squadrons often swap aircraft," CWO2 Jones said. "We don't like to do it, but sometimes we have to in order to accomplish the mission."

In this case, the mission was to deploy six active Harriers with the 13th MEU(SOC). "It is important to have the close air support whenever the MEU commander needs it," CWO2 Jones said. "We need to be there waiting for his call."

When the detachment's Marines found out they would be leaving, they only had a few days to replace four planes. There was an incredible amount of work to be done, said Capt. Daniel Rose, 30, the powerline officer-in-charge.

"We had to pack up all the Harriers that were going out, along the way making sure each part was packed separately, properly and in good condition," explained the native of Plano, Texas. "At the same time, we had incoming planes that had to be inspected to make sure they were in good condition. It got to the point where we were borrowing tools and fluids from other squadrons to complete all our tests."

The Marines had a lot of personal things to take care of despite all the work on the planes. Before they left Aug. 14, they had to get all their personal gear ready and make last-minute preparations. Marines from all over MAG-13, especially those in HMM-161's Harrier detachment, worked around the clock for the three days to make the unit deployable. Meanwhile,

everyone else in the MEU(SOC) spent those last few days saying goodbye to their families.

"There were Marines that missed out on valuable family time in those last three days before we left," said SSgt. David Hayes, a 33-year-old maintenance control staff noncommissioned officer from Columbus, Ohio.

Even though there is the desire to send the AV-8Bs out to all deployed MEU(SOC)s, the last time a West Coast Harrier detachment deployed was over a year ago, Jones said. Availability is the only reason Harriers would not deploy.

"In the 12 years I have been working with Harriers, the Marine Corps has grounded them about five or six times," CWO2 Jones said.

"The Harrier is a complex piece of gear," said Capt. Rose, also a AV-8B II pilot. "We have been having a lot of problems with it in the past two years. Most of the groundings we have are

precautionary measures. Since our plane is a single-engine aircraft, unlike most other jets that have two engines, we don't have the privilege of using our spare to land if one goes bad. If our one engine goes bad – we crash, so we have to be a lot more careful when we decide if we can fly or not."

The Harrier has three to four more Class A mishaps than any other aircraft, said CWO2 Jones. But that doesn't apply to HMM-161. The squadron has flown 208 missions for 280.1 flight hours without any mishaps during the deployment.

The missions included air-to-air and air-to-ground training in Hawaii and Australia as well as combat air patrols off the coast of East Timor during the 13th MEU(SOC) humanitarian assistance operation in September.

While underway, the pilots also completed 202 day and 84 night landings. They also practice flying low altitude courses, which take them through certain



Sgt. M.C. Miller

Corporal Chris Kelb, a 24-year-old Harrier mechanic from Centerville, Ohio, works on the radar equipment in the nose of an AV-8B Harrier in the hangar deck of USS Tarawa. This Harrier is one of six attached to the aviation combat element of 13th MEU(SOC).

Sergeant Major

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Capable."

And although it may not seem it, we're only halfway through the float. In the area of the world we're in, I think it has been conclusively shown that anything can happen at any time. This region is one of the world's hot spots; it has been for a

long time and will continue to be for a long time.

What I've seen during the operation has made me think the Marine Corps is in good hands for the future. I saw Marines and Sailors pull together and become of one mind when it came to mission accomplishment. I saw Marines and Sailors willing to sacrifice individual comforts, whether it was sleep, privacy or comfort, to

accomplish the mission.

But one other thing I saw was that these Marines and Sailors could all do this because of the outstanding support they are receiving from the homefront. If these warriors from the sea were out here worried about a situation at home, accomplishing our mission would be that much more difficult to achieve. On behalf of the entire MEU, thanks for hanging in there.

MISSION

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rorist bombing, forming Joint Task Force Determined Response. The joint task force included the frigate USS Hawes, the destroyer USS Donald Cook, the supply ship USS Camden, the fleet ocean tug USNS Catawba and various other support elements from Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet.

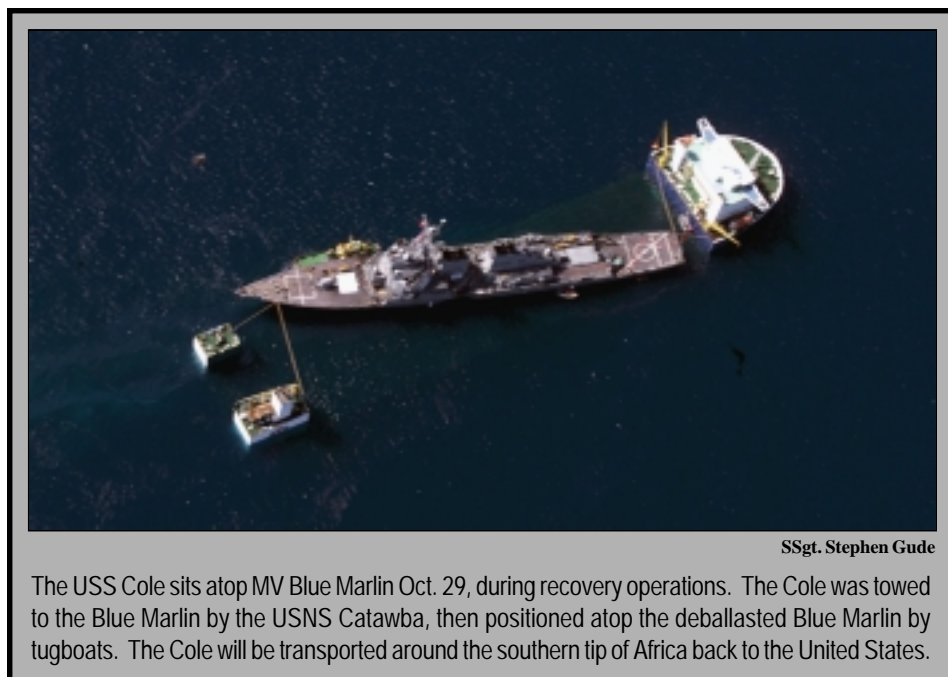
The 13th MEU (SOC)/Tarawa ARG team augmented security, provided assistance to the FBI and other support agencies, messing and billeting to the crew of USS Cole, and command and control for Operation Determined Response off the coast of Yemen.

Cooks from Headquarters and Service Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/1, provided hot meals after the Cole lost use of its dining facilities. Getting a hot meal was not something Cole Sailors expected would be such a treat after pulling into Aden.

Two hours after USS Cole pulled into Aden harbor for a refueling stop, unknown terrorists, riding in a small boat, struck the port side hull of the Cole with a deadly blow. The explosion was heard round the world, conjuring bitter memories of the 1996 bombing of the Air Force barracks in Dharan, killing 19, and the devastating memories of the 1983 terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, which killed 241 Americans. It was less than two weeks before the anniversary of the Beirut bombing when USS Cole added its name to the history of senseless terrorist acts. The explosion killed 17 of the Cole's crew and tore a hole in the ship more than 40 feet in diameter, immobilizing it in the harbor.

Once on scene, the 13th MEU (SOC)/Tarawa ARG provided immediate security to allow Yemeni-contracted tug boats to push USS Cole out of the harbor so that USNS Catawba could hook up a towline and drag the crippled ship out to meet the Blue Marlin. Catawba towed Cole for nearly 23 nautical miles to a docking site to link up with the Blue Marlin. After Blue Marlin ballasted and sunk down into the water, USS Cole was positioned over the submerged deck. Rigging lines were tied off to several pillars and the command tower to fasten the Cole to the Blue Marlin. The dry dock ship then slowly deballasted, lifting Cole out of the water.

USS Cole was part of the United States' ongoing mission to build stability



SSgt. Stephen Gude

The USS Cole sits atop MV Blue Marlin Oct. 29, during recovery operations. The Cole was towed to the Blue Marlin by the USNS Catawba, then positioned atop the deballasted Blue Marlin by tugboats. The Cole will be transported around the southern tip of Africa back to the United States.

in the Middle East, when disaster struck.

"I feel an emptiness inside, because I keep thinking about a lot of shipmates who have been pulled away," said Master Chief Petty Officer James Parlier, USS Cole command master chief. "I wish they were standing beside us now."

"It was definitely an overwhelming experience," said Cpl. Kenneth C. Harrison, a 20-year-old administrative clerk from Azle, Texas, who spent a week in Aden to provide critical accountability of all U.S. forces ashore. "I was just glad to have contributed in some way. I also felt comfortable knowing that our own Marines were providing security for us."

"The (Cole) crew is pretty exhilarated right now," said Parlier. "Whoever did this is not going to break our American spirit. We are looking forward to getting home."

"Our response to the attack on the Cole required us to carry out a wide range of tasks which MEU(SOC)s do not usually perform," said Col. Christopher J. Gunther, commanding officer of 13th MEU (SOC). "As always, the Marines and Sailors of the Tarawa ARG/13th MEU(SOC) team responded magnificently to the challenge and have worked 24 hours a day over the last three weeks to ensure the Cole's every need was fully met. They have turned this act of terrorism into a visible demonstration of American resolve to remain engaged with our allies worldwide, and I am extremely proud of their efforts."

The 13th MEU(SOC) is currently on a six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf.

MAIL CALL

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constantly, increasing every day until mail finally arrived: "Hey, Sgt. Johnson, when do we get mail?"

"Oh, it's constant," she said. "At the gym, while I'm eating, walking around, on the phone, through e-mail -- some people even call into my berthing just to ask the same question."

But if there's anyone who can keep a smile while hearing the same question over and over, Sgt. Johnson is that person. She describes herself as a positive person and enjoys being around people.

"Sergeant Johnson is one of the most fun-loving people I know," said GySgt. Leon Martin, motor transport chief, Battalion Landing Team 3/1. "I always enjoy when she's around, because she always brightens the day with her humor."

"I like talking to people, just picking people's brains," she said. "I just met a guy in the Navy from my hometown, and I found out just by saying hello and striking up small talk with him."

She's carried that attitude with her since the beginning of her six-year career, whether at El Toro, Calif., Iwakuni, Japan, Miramar, Calif., and now Camp Pendleton. Iwakuni was her favorite duty station.

"I had a good working environment there. When it came time to reenlist, there was no question in my mind, because my

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Command Element Scoop

Administration

Not much has happened the month of October except the additional assignment of the J-1 accountability after the attack on USS Cole. This gave us the additional task of providing the accountability of not just the MEU, but also other branches of the military and civilians that worked almost around the clock in support of recovery of USS Cole.

We are almost to the halfway point and looking forward to our return and some time in the desert, which will give us a chance to get off the ship and see what it is like to walk on dry land again. Cpl. Mayertucker still seems to find his way down to the smoke pit to try and exercise his arm and lungs with how much secondhand smoke he can inhale. He should actually receive an award for the most frugal Marine I know, because no one that can take so many smoke breaks per day with no money and still be able to smoke. Nonetheless, a Marine that has come a

long way.

Lance Cpl. Marquez has been enjoying himself away from the S-1 for the past two weeks since he has been loaned out to the ship's store to continue the tradition of providing 'weight gainers' in the vending machines and drink machines outside our office. It makes you really wonder why they put these machines outside our office. Is that why they call it 'pogey bait'? Lance Cpl. Underwood is just happy to be here, but really misses his new wife being that they just got married right before deployment with a honeymoon almost as quick as the wedding reception. This is really new to them being separated without having an argument.

Corporal Harrison, who was recently promoted, also had a "vacation" out of the S-1 by going ashore in Yemen to help us with accountability of people. A tough job but one that was performed admirably. Lance Cpl. Boyler has still been working on his best Andrew Dice Clay impersonations and listening to Frank Sinatra while watching the Godfather trilogy. I wonder if he knows there are other nationalities besides Italian. All fun and games aside, the S-1 crew has learned so much and has really turned around to becoming a better, more proficient office.

Intelligence

The 13th MEU Command Element S-2 had an action-packed October and here's why:

We were eagerly looking forward to liberty in Bahrain just one day before USS Cole was attacked. Immediately, our attentions and concerns shifted toward the survivors of USS Cole and their families. As the entire S-2 scrambled to prepare all-source intelligence products for possible mission support, the USS Tarawa captain announced that our mission, Operation Determined Response, was to steam directly to Yemen and assist the Joint Task Force, that was rapidly descending on Aden, in the recovery of USS Cole and the dangerous investigation that needed to be executed quickly. SSgt. Zorotrian, Sgt. Elizalde, and Cpl. Hoole led the way as all-source intelligence analysts by preparing valueable force protection briefs with the help from near real-time imagery support and the incredible exploitation expertise of SSgt. Drury. SSgt. Zorotrian and the HET team were truly the warriors on the tip of the spear because they went ashore to assist the FBI in their labor intensive force protection and investigation tasks. Sgt. Snyder kicked butt as our Web mistress! Cpl. Sikes continues to be our saving grace...

Tensions ran high for weeks, but by the end of the month we had delivered the Cole Sailors to Oman to be flown home to their families. SSgt. Montgomery, SSgt. Tuggle, and SSgt. Zorotrian stayed in Yemen to provide further



Now here's a motley crew. These vagabonds may look like they're playing an innocent game of pool during some well-deserved liberty, but the jury's still out on them.

From the Homefront...

Well, we are over the hump! I am very proud of each and everyone for making this milestone. It's downhill from here!

The ladies of the MSSG did an outstanding job on the fall festival (Oct. 14). The food was great and the kids had scads of fun. I am still amazed on the size of the huge ghost pinniata! They had several games to include a cool cakewalk. Thanks again for all your hard work.

Join us for a military feast

Our next holiday is Thanksgiving. I'd like to encourage our 13th MEU families that will be in the area this holiday to join some of us at the messhall for the holiday meal. This is a great opportunity if you don't want to cook that big meal just for the kids.

The messhalls will be serving the Thanksgiving dinner between 3-5 p.m. I am organizing families to meet at 3:30 p.m. who want to share the meal together. The cost of the meal is \$4.30 each for families of E-4's and below; and \$5.20 a piece for all others.

The three messhalls we will be dining at: School of Infantry, for the folks up at San Onofre; DelMar, for the people at Wire Mountain and Sierra Mesa; and the Headquarters and Support Battalion facility, near the Joint Reception Center

at mainside.

The kids will enjoy the opportunity to eat where Marines eat, just like dad. The servicemen would probably enjoy the company of your family on a holiday they can't be with their own families. No need to call—just show up!

Christmas Party coming

Mark your calendars for Saturday, Dec. 16, for the 13th MEU Family Christmas Party. The event, hosted by the key volunteers of the Command Element, begins at 11 a.m. It will be held at the same place as the Fall Festival, the Abby Reinke Community Center.

One of the highlights of the event will be a holiday cooking contest. There will be two categories: desserts and "all other dishes." We will have several major command officials and their spouses serve as our special guests and judges for the event. So break out your favorite recipes! This will be a potluck event, and because everyone has different dishes they would like to enter – we are not assigning anyone categories. For those who are not entering the contest, please bring an item of your choice. Those

who plan on entering the cook-off will have to have their dish registered no later than 11:15 a.m. on the day of the event. Judging will begin at 11:15. You don't have to sign-up for the cooking contest until the day of the event.

Another fun highlight will be a caroling contest. Families can try their fun at singing their favorite Christmas carols. Like caroling, you must sing without the aid of any electronic pre-recorded music. Just like in the good old days. Instruments are allowed. Sign up on the day of the event.

There will be plenty of fun and games for the kids.

Because this event takes special planning, we need everyone who plans on attending to email me by Dec. 1. I will need to know how many children will be attending, their full names and ages. Those who don't have email, call me.

THE DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, DEC. 1 -- NO EXCEPTIONS.

Bowling along

Sunday night at the Bowling Alley has been the place for some good old-fashioned family fun. You are always encouraged to come and join us. We bowl at 5 p.m. and the price is \$7 per person (shoes are extra). We will not be bowling on Nov. 25, Dec. 24 or Dec. 31.

Team standings for the League:

<u>Team</u>	
1st	MSSG-13
2nd	Wingers
3rd	Better than Zero
4th	Inkspots
5th	Shamrocks
6th	Silver Bullets
7th	G-Force
8th	Pasta Lovers
9th	Amphibious Tigers



Apparently, our loved ones are celebrating in our absence! This spy photo taken at a "They're Gone!" party was sent by a 10 year old who knows more about the internet than both her parents combined. Now we know...



Sylvia Landis
13th MEU KVN
Coordinator



What's that smell, Laila? Joshua Miller (son of Sgt. Matthew and Tami Miller) demonstrates his keen sense of comic timing, just like his dad. Great photo, Tami!

SCOOP

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assistance to the FBI's investigation.

During this reporting period, Cpl. Logan McKay received a Good Conduct Medal.

Operations

Not a lot has happened since the last Family Gram. We did stop by the wonderful world of Thailand. It was a time for a well-deserved break and time to get away from work and cut loose.

After leaving this exotic wonderland, we headed to the Persian Gulf, to what we anticipated was going to be a routine deployment. We had planned on doing a couple of field operations and a little liberty as well. The cards were played a little bit differently due to the attack on USS Cole. The Marines and Sailors of the Fighting 13th MEU (SOC) responded in true fashion. The Marines of the S-3 quickly shot into action. You can be very proud of the way all of your loved ones performed. We promise more info in the next Family Gram.

Hey, there are a couple of other good things that did happen. Both Cpl. Tyler and Cpl. Peroutka received Good Conduct Medals Oct. 24.

Logistics

As you know, we were detoured from our routine stops in the Gulf to help support the personnel of the USS Cole. The S-4 Supply Section shined by finding anything under the sun to support the FBI and the crew of the Cole, from MRE's to boonie covers. SSgt. Corzo processed numerous last-minute ammo requests to support the security patrols. Sgt. Morneault and Sgt. Hudnall manifested and tracked more than 150 Marines and Sailors moving via air and surface. Everyone in the S-4 played an important part in Operation Determined Response.

Both SSgt. Corzo and Sgt. Morneault reenlisted for four more years of fun and

excitement. Additionally, Sgt. Morneault was selected to the rank of staff sergeant.

One of our long lost Marines, Capt. Price, returned to the ship after a nice long vacation in Bahrain.

We send our best to SSgt. and Mrs. Schmidt, and hope all is well. Sgt. Knight enjoyed a fun filled month working at the gym, and can't wait to return. Finally, Sgt. Cossel has had the pins removed from his finger and should be back to normal in no time.

Communications

Congratulations are in order to the following Marines who were awarded the Good Conduct Medal: Sgt. Thogersen (second award); Sgt. Arriaga, Cpls. Stallings, Quintero and Stigers (first award).

S-6 Marines continue to set the pace for excellence and leadership. The "Comm" Marines are staying right in the fight for advancement to higher ranks, with newly promoted Sgts. Arriaga and Garber, as well as Cpl. Zavala.

As we are heading into our third month and almost at the halfway point, the S-6 Marines just visited exotic Phuket, Thailand. During this liberty port, all the Marines experienced the local culture through tours, shopping and nightlife.

While in Phuket, the S-6 Marines enjoyed a full five days of liberty. During their adventures, Marines experienced a very favorable currency rate and bargain shopping. An

assortment of tours ranging from sight seeing, animal handling, and elephant rides through the jungle were enjoyed by many of the Marines. In the last Family Gram, we stated that the Marines are looking forward to the next challenge. Well, here it is. We are off the coast of Yemen working hard. The S-6 Marines' morale and spirits are high and they are ready for the task. The Marines are doing an outstanding job to make sure that this mission is successful and that we make it home safe and on time.

We can't wait to see you. Bye for now.



Although Sgt. Thogerson looks like he's in the Halloween spirit, he's actually looking for another Wog he can harass.

Comm Fun Fact:
Data Comm has completed more than 2,200 trouble tickets since workups began. That's more than one ticket for every member of the MEU.

Legal

Well, the Staff Judge Advocate's office was certainly overjoyed at the completion of the first college semester. Maj. Carberry's Criminal Justice class actually survived his final exam without too much bloodshed. As for Cpl. Hanson, she actually succeeded in finishing her first college class without falling asleep. We will see what the second semester brings us.

Disbursing

November is finally here!! We can't wait for the turkey (re-heated chicken) dinner for Thanksgiving. We have survived October and its many surprises. This past month will be one to remember, with the tragedy of the USS Cole, 1stLt. Melendez making a rock video to the great music of AC/DC, and Gunny Gomez being promoted to his current rank. The gunny is now able to enjoy his meals in the Chief's Mess, while we corporals continue to suffer down in the mess decks. He has yet to bring us a sample from the Chief's Mess, but there is still time.

Cpl. Cole, like always, is working hard on payrolls and thinking of his family.



The Disbursing Section: (L-R) GySgt. Gomez, Cpl. Moreno, Cpl. Cole and 1stLt. Melendez. They never miss a photo opportunity.

SCOOP

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He should get a pay raise with all the work he accomplishes. He has also started working out at the gym and claims he will be indestructible when we get back. I, Cpl. Moreno, on the other hand, am setting the example of what muscles should look like for the lieutenant. I don't mind a single bit. Split Pay continues to keep me busy, but I shall conquer it. Like I said before, by the end of this float, I will have memorized everyone's SSN.

Nonetheless, time is flying by with the lieutenant constantly showing us his new "Salsa" moves he learns every night, and Gunny making fun of him. Our current mission is to get Cpl. Cole dancing to the rhythm of Salsa.

Lastly, we want to thank our family and friends for the packages of goodies we have received. Expect us to be 50 pounds heavier when we return. Don't forget...you sent them.

Medical

The Cole situation has heightened our thoughts on how life is fragile and can be taken from us -- when a determined individual willing to make any sacrifice to achieve a goal can do so much damage. The Cole's medical response to this tragic situation was swift and sure. All of the medical assets of the 13th MEU were ready, and when called upon, they performed the tasks they were assigned admirably. As we reflect upon the situation and its aftermath, we are left with a nagging thought. It can happen at any time and in any place and to anyone. We must be vigilant...are we ready? I can tell you this, Marines of the 13th MEU (SOC) are. Medical is standing by, ready to assist. WWJD. The Chief.

Chaplain

The month of October has been a very busy month for all Marines and Sailors within the 13th MEU. After leaving the lush, beautiful countryside of Phuket, Thailand, the 13th MEU was put into action. With the word of USS Cole being attacked and damaged, our Marines and Sailors put on their war gear and their war faces and rogered up to the assignments

that were given to them. This is a time for all of our families back home to be very proud of the warriors of the 13th MEU.

As far as the chaplain staff of the MEU, RP2 Marbley and myself are holding our own. We have been allowed to provide three Bible studies and two worship services that are held during the course of the week aboard Tarawa. We went into Aden, Yemen, to conduct a worship service for those providing support and protection of USS Cole.

There is a special thanks that must go out to Jennifer Ellinger. Mrs. Ellinger, her daughter and some other KVN folks put together some Halloween candy packages for our single Marines. As we passed them out, the smiles on these Marines faces showed their thanks for someone back home who remembered them. Thanks Jen, and all the people who put the bags together.

Please keep all of our Marines and Sailors of the 13th MEU in your prayers. We truly are on the tip of the spear. Encourage your Marine or Sailor to attend the worship service of their choice, it does help in times like this. It also keeps me gainfully employed.

Until next month, God Bless.

Public Affairs

We're in one of the world's most historic regions -- and true to form, historic events have occurred.

Unfortunately, these events have been the kind we don't want.

With that thought, we know that you are worried about us, but our job sometimes puts us in harm's way. It's just part of the price we pay so that everyone can enjoy the lifestyle we all have become accustomed to -- one of freedom.

On a different note, one thing we have become accustomed to is the look of success, the look of power and the look of style many MEU(SOC) Marines have acquired after purchasing (fake) Rolex, Breitling, Omega, Cartier, Gucci and other expensive-brand watches in Thailand. I bought a (fake) Breitling and wore it during my Shore Patrol duty, when, true to its fakeness, it promptly fell off my wrist while



As always, we have to contain Sgt. Miller's excitement. The guy's outta control.

we were being briefed.

Talk about embarrassing... A link on the bracelet had broken. I had it repaired during a break, but the next day, it fell off again!

I finally took it back to the place I bought it from and they quickly repaired it and even shined it up. They also gave me the opportunity to "upgrade" to a (fake) Rolex! No, I like my Breitling, because it has continued working even after falling off my wrist and landing hard twice.

Landog's fire team of Rolexes look so good, if we ever get back to Thailand, I'm buying two (we call 'em "Folex").

Sergeant Miller wants Tami to know that I now know how to spell her name correctly. I apologize for any mistakes I previously made, Tami.

Lt. Landis is too busy doing stuff that will affect the future of Public Affairs -- heck, the future of the WORLD -- to even have time to remember that he has a veteran such as myself and a hardcharger like Sgt. Miller to take some of the workload out of him.

I look upon his hard work as a credit to himself, but sometimes I wish I could lighten his load.

Then there are times when I just sit back and say, "You GO, Lieutenant!"

A good Public Affairs chief knows when to turn the switch on, and when to turn it off.

Stores beware: 'Baht Boy' is on the loose

by SSgt. Stephen Gude

When I come home, I'm going to change my nickname to "Baht Boy."

You see, I enjoyed shopping in Thailand so much, I want to go back and do it again, just because it was so refreshing to actually be able to haggle and not feel like you got ripped off.

The method is this: you find an item you like. You ask the merchant what his or her price is, and they give you a price, which is usually very high. You know this and so does the merchant.

But wait! Instead of thinking the transaction is over, just wait for the merchant to hand you a calculator. You discreetly type in a number, divisible by ten and that you would have to multiply by at least 10 to get the merchant's original number. If the merchant said "2,700 baht," you'd say "270 baht."

The merchant will feign indignation and say something like "That's ridiculous," or "I have to feed my children," but hold on. The merchant will make another offer on the calculator, this time still high,

but slightly more realistic.

Now it's your turn with the calculator again. If you're a hard bargainer, or you just want to see the merchant become even more indignant, retype the same amount you typed before. The merchant will pull a Fred Sanford (of "Sanford and Son," for those of you too young to have watched the show), faking a heart attack and calling for "Elizabeth" to take him away. Then he'll miraculously recover in time to grab your arm as you're walking away.

Now, the merchant will type in a price closer to what you're willing to pay.

It doesn't matter what type of item it is. Everything is subject to bargaining, except perhaps restaurant food, but that didn't stop us from trying. Then again, when you're getting a steak dinner for the equivalent of \$6, quibbling really is the last thing on your mind.

Back to the merchant. Now, you type in a number closer to what the merchant has, if the number is still below what you expect to pay. The merchant still has a little room, and will often ask you what is the difference for a few baht ("baht" is Thai money, and it's really very pretty. I would show you a photo of some of my baht, but I spent it all). "Just split with me," the merchant will say. But hold on to your guns. The merchant will always cave in. Even if they say "I cannot sell for that low," just start walking away.

One method I found that worked well

was double-teaming. I negotiated the price of a watch down to 2,000 baht, when my libo buddy came in and found a watch he liked. He said "Both watches, 2,500 baht."

The merchant said, "No way." Then all of a sudden, I remembered my credit card didn't have much limit to it (honestly!) and I told the merchant I couldn't spend more than 1,500 baht. To spare you the gory details, we got both watches for 2,700 baht, about \$30 each.

We also double-teamed a tailor to get our clothes cheaper. We double-teamed an umbrella dealer, paying the equivalent of maybe \$1.50 each for a couple of beautiful wooden umbrellas. The merchant was so mad, he made us vow not to tell anyone what we paid. That occurred at several places we bought goods from.

My libo buddy is the bargaining king. If we had worked it long enough, we perhaps could have received our watches for free, and had the merchant paying US for telling everyone the place where we got the timepieces. He was that good.

I have become so enamored of the way merchants in Thailand sell their wares that I want to transfer this principle to America. It already exists at auto dealers, but that's too high a level. We should be able to go into, say, a clothing store and make deals, and every transaction must be in baht, to confuse the merchants:

"Hey, I'll give you 1,000 baht for that gold rope necklace," I'll offer.

"1,000? Okay," the merchant will say, convinced he's gotten over on me because he's getting 1,000 baht. He's probably believing "baht" is the new slang word for dollars or something. Ha!

Baht Boy strikes again.

**'We should (make)
every transaction in
America in baht, to
confuse merchants...'
SSgt. Stephen Gude**

*From the Halls of Montezuma,
To the Shores of Tripoli*

*We've fought for 225 years,
So America can continue to be*

*The country our
forefathers envisioned,
From Sea to Shining Sea*

*Happy 225th Birthday,
Marines!*

MAIL CALL

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master sergeant took care of his Marines," she said. "Everyone in that shop who was eligible to reenlist did, because we got to see how the Marine Corps could really be."

She gets a kick out of seeing some of the items that come through the mail. Incoming mail cannot be larger than 108 inches in length or girth and can only weigh 70 pounds.

"Somebody sent a fishing pole

and then there was a guy who got rolls of fabric," Sgt. Johnson said.

Sergeant Johnson gives credit to the clerks who work for her during mail call.

"The clerks make my job much easier. If it wasn't for them, mail would get to the Marines and Sailors more slowly."

Her intent, however, is to make sure that doesn't happen.

"I understand how people feel when they hear 'mail call' sounded," Sgt. Johnson said. "I don't want to disappoint them."